

# CASA of Cochise County News & Views

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Present Danger Assessment and Planning



Abby Dodge and family

Happy New Year! It feels weird to write that, since I'm actually writing this before heading out on vacation to see my family for the holidays. We have the pleasure of driving to both Illinois and Wisconsin to see both sides of the family and let the kids see all their cousins. It will be quite an adventure, and hopefully we'll have some time to relax during all the activity.

I hope that each of you were surrounded by loved ones over the holidays. I know the holidays can be difficult for some, but I hope you realize that your CASA family is here for you throughout the year!

Now that it's 2018, what are your goals for this year? I'd like to challenge each of you to try to bring one new advocate to our ranks. We saw consistent growth through 2017 and I'd love to keep that momentum going! So please, think about those people you come in

## Coordinator's Comments

contact throughout your life. If you think of someone that you think would make an effective CASA, please tell them about the program. Feel free to give them my contact information, or ask them if they'd be okay with you giving me their contact information. Word of mouth seems to remain the best way to find new advocates, and if you're pre-screening them for me, then that makes it even more likely that they would become effective CASAs.

Thank you to all of you who got your training completed for 2017. We finished the year with 92% compliance. That's excellent, but let's try for 100% this year! I've received several suggestions for topics for upcoming trainings, such as trauma, foster care licensing/oversight, working with the various agencies effectively, and crossover youth (those who have also been adjudicated as delinquent). I'll be trying to have these topics covered throughout the year. If you have other suggestions, please let me know. A good place to provide these suggestions is by completing the 2017 Annual Program Survey, by using the link that I emailed to everyone in November. We are required to have Annual Program Surveys completed by each advocate, so if you haven't done that yet, please do so as soon as possible. If you need me to re-send the link, let me know.

Finally, I'm really looking forward to continuing to work with each of you in 2018. This program would not be what it is without you guys, and we really appreciate everything that you do.



# CASAaz After One Year

by Ned Letto, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

CASAaz was introduced to us a little over a year ago. It was in September of 2016 that I first used CASAaz. To say I was happy with it would be a gross exaggeration. CASAaz has grown on me and I've learned what it can do and what it does not do well. I have learned to live with its abilities or lack of abilities, as they may be.

Just as with the paper forms we used to use, each of us uses CASAaz differently. With the paper forms, there were people who would briefly document the activities of the month and then there was me. There were times when my monthly report would extend to 11 pages.

What is important is what CASAaz is meant to accomplish. It has certainly cut down on the amount of paper that had to be mailed, filed in a "secure" area of my house, and then delivered back to the CASA office for disposal after the case was over. CASAaz is certainly timely. We are getting disclosures more quickly now. CASAaz also has the potential for keeping the CASA Coordinator better updated on your case.

Before CASAaz, there was a push each month to get our logs in so the CASA Coordinator knew how many hours, miles and dollars we had spent on our cases so she could complete her required reports in a timely manner. Now, CASAaz is able to provide that information instantly, so long as we have done our part in inputting the information.

I for one do not take many, if any, handwritten notes. I like to use my computer for my documentation. My entries into CASAaz are usually quite detailed and timely. I will do my entries the same day, or no

more than the next day, while the events are still fresh in my mind. I feel that keeping up with my CASAaz contact log is a very good way to communicate with my CASA Coordinator.

As for court reports, I always do a draft of my court report in Microsoft Word first. I then cut and paste into the CASAaz court report application. I understand some people are having difficulty with CASAaz when they have multiple children in a case. After my initial failures with this, I have been able to use CASAaz for multiple children successfully.

I am hoping that the state CASA Office will continue to improve CASAaz; it has a tremendous potential for making what we do easier to accomplish.

*Never let a computer know you're in a hurry.*

*~Author Unknown*

# All the King's Horses Children's Ranch

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Three of my girls have been fostered at the ranch with Daina and Al Valenzuela. I know the ranch is classified as a group home, but Daina and Al actually parent the children they care for. They spend one-on-one time with each child and help the girls work out any arguments. They are fabulous role models. Daina nurtures each girl, and Al plays games with them and gets them involved in various projects. The children have opportunities to go on outings, which include an overnight campout.

Daina is in regular contact with the Benson schools. She and Al both take the girls to their appointments. Both Al and Daina are upbeat and love what they do. Christian values are modeled by both of them and by all the employees at the ranch.

Daina told me the age requirements are 3-18. Right now the only clients are girls, but she told me the second house could take boys in mid-January. The ranch can take up to 10 children. Right now they have four.

The ranch is an outstanding facility. I intend to recommend placement there for any of my CASA kids who need a placement. I especially like that the location is close to Sierra Vista, so the children who are placed there are only a short distance away. Parents and relatives and CASAs can easily visit the children. I have had to drive as far as Phoenix to visit a CASA kid. And more than once I was afraid my child was going to be placed in Payson.

One advantage of having a child at the ranch is that the Benson schools are outstanding. Teens have a choice between regular high school, alternative high school, and on-line school. I have had girls in all three, and as a retired teacher, I feel that one of these would meet the needs of any student.

I am grateful that the ranch exists. I support its philosophy. There is lots of land, so everyone can breathe. I am delighted to be working with well trained, enthusiastic people who love what they are doing.

***Three cheers for the ranch!***



## The Second Annual Christmas Party

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer



The Sheriff's Office in Bisbee was jumping from 11:00-1:00 on Saturday, December 9th. At least 17 CASAs were there, and CASA kids were everywhere. Daina Valenzuela from the

Ranch brought four girls, and the other house mother brought one. One of my foster mothers in Tucson brought my girl to the Ranch for a ride with Daina. I drove my girl back to Tucson after the party. Sharon Buono helped Lin Wright transport her three children from Huachuca City because Lin's truck was too small. Jan and Bud drove to Benson to pick up their girl. The Nolans came from Wilcox

to pick up their girl and bring her.

All the kids made snowmen, and everyone was taking pictures. Abby, Lisette, and Roxy were busy, busy, busy. Abby picked up the pizza, and Lisette and Roxy showed everyone how

to make a snowman. The process involved a sock, rice, many rubber bands, a hat, buttons, magic marker, and two glue guns. The rice spilled a bit, but vigilant CASAs helped corral the mess.



Photo by Mary Blanchard

Everyone ended up with a creative snowman. My girl in Tucson gave hers to her foster mother, and the snowman became a participant in the Nativity scene. Frosty the Snowman entertained the children, and everyone ate pizza and other goodies. The popcorn during the movie was a big hit. Jan Dragoo went straight to the caramel popcorn, and I followed suit. Bud Dragoo got a lesson in Snapchat from his girl, and after she signed him up, she posted pictures of both of her CASAs.

It was a perfect party. Melissa Wendeborn had the best costume. She was an elf and danced around, smiling the whole time.

I have my 2018 calendar and I am ready to write in the date as soon as Abby sends out the invitations for the next Christmas party.



Other Photos by Sharon Buono

# Delivering the Present

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

My baby is almost one and was not able to attend the CASA Christmas party, so I took his present to deliver to him. A week later, I was driving up to his house with his present and a present for his foster sister. The house was decorated for Christmas, and there were toys and books everywhere. My baby and his sister, almost three, were busy playing. The baby can crawl everywhere, but he prefers his walker. He is allowed to range freely around the play room.

I brought in the huge gift bag. The girl immediately wanted to explore the contents of the bag. The baby was busy trying to break through the barricade of toys that was protecting the Christmas tree. I got down on the tile floor to help the girl open the gifts. It took us a few moments to get everything out of the bag. We then turned our attention to the big wrapped box. The girl understood perfectly the principle of opening presents, but she couldn't tear the paper. I finally had to help her. I usually find tearing the paper to be a no-brainer, but I found this paper to be amazingly resistant. The girl and I finally worked out a system where I tore a bit, and then we both yanked in unison. The paper finally yielded, and we were able to pull off half the wrapping. The parents and I agreed that this is the best quality wrapping paper we have ever seen. It is twice as heavy as the regular wrapping paper. I thought the CASA office had wrapped the present and said so in my article. Abby corrected me and told me the presents were wrapped by the community donors. Many thanks to the community donors for the great presents and the amazing wrapping paper.

Meanwhile, I was still sitting on the tile floor with the girl, and both of us were struggling to open the second half of the toy. We finally got it

open, but the push toy required assembly. Dad was right on it, and the girl was going to help. I decided that the process would be more efficient if I distracted the girl with her presents, so I grabbed her presents and asked her to help me open them. I was still sitting on the floor and wondering if I would be able to get up, but the immediate task was opening the books and distracting the girl. The books were easier to open. We looked at the first one, which was about trains. One train had cars with animals leaning out the windows, and she could identify every single one. We looked briefly at the book on tractors, and then the push toy was assembled.

The baby was now out of his walker and down on the floor, and he headed straight towards the push toy. His father helped him stand up, and he grabbed the handle, but his attention was caught by the balls on the front of the toy. He let go of the handle and dropped to the floor and tried to crawl through the opening between the handles. His head got stuck, so he began to crawl to force his head forward. He was able to move the toy, but he could not reach the balls.

Somehow I had managed to get up off the floor. It was not a pretty sight but I made it, and I joined the parents and sister who were waiting to see what the baby would do. He did not give up, he did not cry, but he did continue to try to force his head towards the balls. His dad released him, and helped him reach the balls.

At this moment, I wanted to take a picture (having missed the real action shots), but I discovered I had left my purse in my car. LuRue wants lots of pictures, but all I have are words, and you have my small story of the successful delivery of a CASA Christmas present to the baby and his sister who missed the party.

## CASA Provides Toys for Kids in Foster Care

Courtesy of Sierra Vista Herald/Review

Submitted to the paper by Ned Letto, Cochise County CASA Volunteer



The local Court Appointed Special Advocate program received money from the national organization to buy toys for all the kids in Cochise County currently in foster care.

*Herald/Review submitted photo courtesy Ned Letto*

The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Program has donated enough toys to see that every child in foster care in Cochise County has a toy for Christmas.

Each year, the National CASA Program selects a limited number of CASA programs throughout the county to receive toys. This year, the Cochise County program was selected as one of the programs to receive toys.

The toys were provided to the local Cochise County Council for CASA Inc. On Wednesday, Nov. 29 and Thursday, November 30, Abigail Dodge, Cochise County CASA program manager, and Ned Letto, vice-

president of the Cochise Council for CASA Inc., delivered the toys to each of the three DCS offices in Douglas, Benson and Sierra Vista.

The over 200 children involved with DCS in Cochise County will be able to have toys for Christmas.

The local CASA program is currently able to provide CASA Advocates to about one in four children in DCS care. They are always in need of volunteers, so more children can have a CASA advocate.

The Cochise County Council for CASA Inc. is a 501c(3) organization and is a qualified Arizona Foster Care Tax Credit organization.

# WELCOME!

... to New CASA Volunteers

**Verenice Quiroz**

**Amber Aarup**



## Anniversaries

Bud Dragoo - 14 years

Since 1/23/2004

Jan Dragoo - 14 years

Since 1/23/2004

### You Can Still Help Cochise County Foster Children Through Arizona Tax Credits

Donations made through April 18, 2018  
Still Qualify As An Arizona Tax Credit for  
2017.

The Cochise County Council for CASA, Charity. A single tax payer can donate up to \$500 or a married couple can donate up to \$1,000 and claim the donation for a tax credit on their Arizona Income Tax.

The CASA Council is our own local support for Cochise County CASA. By donating to the CASA Council, you are donating to help your CASA Children and it doesn't cost you anything. You will get the money back as an Arizona Income Tax credit.

Donations can be made to:

**Cochise County Council for CASA, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 4013,**

**Sierra Vista, AZ 85636.**

Submitted by Ned Letto

# CASA of the Month

## Ned Letto

I am pleased to announce that the CASA of the Month for December 2017 is Ned Letto.

Ned has been with us since 2007, so he's one of our veteran CASAs. Although Ned works tirelessly for his kids year-round, he still manages to amaze me with how much he does to support all the dependent children in our county. For those of you who may not know, Ned serves as the Vice President on the Cochise County Council for CASA, Inc. (CCCC,I). He did the paperwork and follow-up with National CASA to allow CCCC,I to receive a pallet of brand new toys – enough toys for every child in out-of-home care from Cochise County to receive something. Ned and I then delivered these toys to the DCS offices in Douglas, Benson, and Sierra Vista.

In addition to the toys, Ned also loaded all those beautiful quilts from the Hummingbird Stitchers Quilt Guild into the back of his vehicle and delivered them to Bisbee for distribution. Ned once told me approximately how many miles he puts on his vehicle in a year for CASA-related travel only, but unfortunately, I don't remember. However, I promise you, it's a lot!!!

Ned has also mentored some of our new CASAs, which is extremely helpful to me because I know he has a wealth of knowledge to share with our new CASAs. Plus, if I ever need help with anything, I know I can ask Ned and he'll be there. We're also extremely fortunate because his wife, Pat, is so supportive of everything that Ned does.

Thanks, Ned, for everything that you do!



## December 2017

## January 2018

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<b>1 New Year's Day</b>  County Offices Closed	2	3	<b>4 <u>REPORTS DUE:</u></b> Juanita for MB. Mary for V case. Whitney for TW. Chris for MJ.	<b>5 <u>Mary J:</u></b> Report due for JS.	<b>6 Mary Kay H.</b> 
7	<b>8 <u>Carol:</u></b> Report due for D case.  Earth's Rotation Day	9	10	11  Learn Your Name in Morse Code Day	12	13  Make Your Dreams Come True Day
14 Janet B. 	<b>15 Sara N.</b>  Jen: Report due for M case. MLK Day-County Offices Closed	<b>16 <u>REPORTS DUE:</u></b> Darla for MR. Risa for TG. Bonnie for NK-S. Jahanna for FB.	17	<b>18 <u>Ned:</u></b> Report due for EB.	19	20
21  National Hug Day	22	<b>23 <u>REPORTS DUE:</u></b> Juanita for IL. Scott for ET. Deb for A case.	<b>24**TRAINING**</b> FOSTER CARE LICENSING AT SV CONF. ROOM @3PM. CHECK YOUR EMAIL FOR RSVP AND INFO!	25	26	27
28  Fun at Work Day	29	<b>30 <u>Natasa:</u></b> Report due for HA.	31			

# CASA Support Groups



**Morning: Second Thursday of the Month**

**10:00am-12:00 noon**

**Home of Mary Kay Holcomb**

**2515 Cherry Hills Drive  
Sierra Vista, AZ**

**Evening: Last Tuesday of the Month**

**7:00 - 9:00pm**

**Home of LuRue Troyer**

**2300 Iris Drive  
Sierra Vista, AZ**



## ***Cochise County Council for CASA, Inc***

is a nonprofit organization that raises funds to the unmet needs of abused, neglected and abandoned children in the CASA of Cochise County Program. The primary focus is to ensure the educational progress of CASA children through tutoring and scholarships. In addition the council provides clothing, toys and personal items.

**If your CASA child/youth has an unmet need, consider the Cochise County Council for CASA to help!!**

**Call your CASA Coordinator at 432-7521 OR**

**Send an email to [Adodge@courts.az.gov](mailto:Adodge@courts.az.gov)**



## Teacher Adopts Her Student Who Was in Foster Care for 7 Years: 'Every Kid Deserves a Chance'

by Jason Duaine Hahn, People Magazine

*From Reading List provided by Allison Hurtado, CASA Marketing & Community Outreach Specialist, AZ Supreme Court*

A Texas teacher known for being a caregiver to her students went the extra mile this holiday season when she officially adopted her former student who revealed he was in foster care.

Bennie Berry, a teacher at Pathways Learning Center in Beaumont, Texas, first met 16-year-old Anthony last November when he joined her English class. While Anthony stood out from other students with his work ethic and eagerness, Berry had no inclination then that her hard-working student wouldn't just be making an impact in her classroom, but on the course of the rest of her life.

"During a conversation I had with students about family, some of the kids made comments that I should take them home since a lot of them refer to me as a caregiver," Berry tells PEOPLE. "But Anthony turned to me and said I could take him home, for real. That's when he told me he was a foster kid and was up for adoption."

Berry didn't quite know how to react at first—she wasn't sure if he was serious, so she tried to assure Anthony that his parents cared for him and all he had to do was be as good for them as he was for her at school. But Anthony explained to his teacher that he had been in foster care since he was 9 years old.

The two continued to talk about the idea, and the next day, Anthony showed Berry his information on the Texas adoption website. Berry contacted the adoption agency to find out more about the process. But Berry admits she was nervous at the prospect of becoming a

mother to someone.

"The only thing I knew about adoption was what I saw on TV, and it's usually a husband and wife team," she says. "I just didn't know if I was going to be able to do it. But I filled out the inquiry because I wanted to know more."

After Berry attended an educational meeting about adoption, she and Anthony continued to float the idea between each other while she settled on a decision. There was only one obligation Anthony had to uphold in the meantime.

"The only deal we had was that he had to be good!" she says while laughing "Any kid of mine can't be bad or get in trouble!"

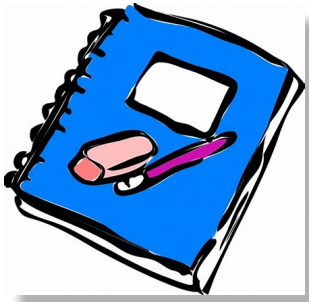
But a few months later, Berry was informed that Anthony's foster mother had put in her 30 days notice to end his stay, and he would be placed in a group home where he would live until he aged out of it. Berry felt she couldn't let that happen, and informed the agency to start the adoption process as soon as they could.

Anthony moved in with Berry in March, and on November 17, he was officially adopted at a courthouse in Jefferson County.

"It's been amazing, we've learned a lot about each other," Berry says, "and we're still learning."



Courtesy Bennie Berry



# From the Manual

## Present Danger Assessment and Planning

*Arizona Department of Child Safety: Policy and Procedure Manual*  
**Chapter 2: Section 4 - (Part 1a of 2)**

### Policy

In response to allegations of abuse or neglect, the department shall assess, promote, and support the safety of a child in a safe and stable family or other appropriate placement.

A present danger assessment shall be completed on all cases where a field investigation is completed and shall be documented in the Child Safety and Risk Assessment (CSRA).

Upon contact with the child and family, the DCS Specialist will determine whether any child in the home where the abuse or neglect was alleged to occur is in present danger.

A child is unsafe when present danger and/or impending danger exists.

A present danger plan shall be implemented for any child assessed as unsafe due to present danger, prior to leaving the child or family. If a present danger plan is implemented, the DCS Specialist must inform the parents that they have the right to an attorney and a hearing before a juvenile court judge if they do not agree to an in-home or voluntary present danger plan that is sufficient to control the danger,

and the Department chooses to remove the child(ren) from the home and file a dependency petition.

A case cannot be closed when a child is unsafe.

### Procedures

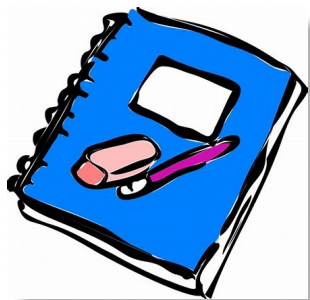
#### Present Danger Assessment

Upon contact with the child and family, the DCS Specialist will determine whether any child in the home where the abuse or neglect was alleged to occur is in present danger. A child is in present danger when there is an immediate, significant, and clearly observable family condition, child condition, or individual behavior that obviously endangers a child right now or threatens to endanger a child at any moment, and requires immediate action to protect the child before the comprehensive Family Functioning Assessment can be completed.

The DCS Specialist must obtain emergency medical treatment for a child when necessary, as soon as possible. Situations that may require emergency medical treatment include, but are not limited to:

- head injuries or loss of consciousness,
- abdominal injuries,

~Continued on next page~



# From the Manual

## Present Danger Assessment and Planning (Continued)

- severe malnourishment or dehydration,
- open wounds or burns, and
- injury to the genitals.

Immediate, significant, and clearly observable are defined as follows:

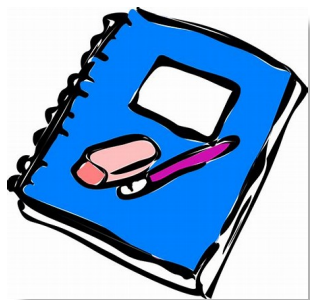
1. **“Immediate”** for present danger means that the dangerous family condition, child condition, or individual behavior is active and operating. What might result from the danger for a child could be happening or occur at any moment. What is endangering the child is happening in the present, it is actively in the process of placing a child in peril. Serious harm will result without prompt investigation and/or DCS Specialist action.
2. **“Significant”** for present danger means that the family condition, child condition, or individual behavior is exaggerated, out of control, and/or extreme. The danger is recognizable because what is happening is vivid, impressive, and notable. What is happening exists as a matter that must be addressed immediately. Significant is anticipated harm that can result in pain, serious injury, disablement, grave or debilitating physical health conditions, acute or grievous suffering, impairment, or death.

3. Present danger is **“clearly observable”** because there are actions, behaviors, emotions, or out-of-control conditions in the home that can be specifically and explicitly described, and which directly harm the child or are highly likely to result in immediate harm to the child.

In **present danger**, the dangerous situation:

- is in the process of occurring (for example, a young child is alone on a busy street);
- just happened (for example, a child presents at an emergency room with a serious unexplained injury);
- happens all the time (for example, young children were left alone last night and are likely to be left home alone again tonight or the child will be accessible to a perpetrator upon release from school); or
- requires an immediate protective action because the alleged abuse or neglect cannot be immediately ruled out and if the allegation is true, the child is in present danger (for example, a child has serious unexplained injuries or there are current allegations of sexual abuse).

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# From the Manual

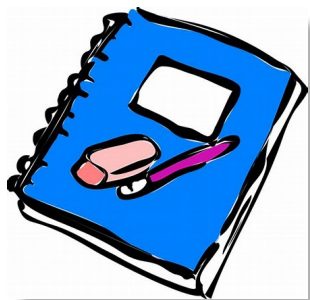
## Present Danger Assessment and Planning (Continued)

### Present Danger Conditions

The following conditions describe present danger when they are immediate (endangering a child right now), significant, and clearly observable:

- child is unsupervised or alone now or on a daily basis, or has been left with a person who is unwilling or unable to provide adequate care, and the child is not capable of caring for himself/herself;
- caregiver is unable to perform essential parental responsibilities right now or all of the time due to alcohol/ substance use, mental health conditions, physical impairment, and/or cognitive limitations;
- caregiver is unable or unwilling to perform essential parental responsibilities and there is no other appropriate caretaker immediately available;
- caregiver is out of control and cannot focus or manage his/ her behavior in ways to properly perform parental responsibilities;
- caregiver's behavior is currently violent, bizarre, erratic, unpredictable, incoherent, or totally inappropriate;
- caregiver is brandishing weapons, known to be dangerous and aggressive, or is currently behaving in attacking or aggressive ways;
- dynamics in the household include an adult establishing power, control, or coercion over a caregiver in a way that impairs necessary supervision or care of the child and has caused, or will likely cause, serious harm to the child's physical, mental or emotional health;
- caregiver has an extremely negative perception of the child, such as seeing the child as demon possessed; and/or has extremely unrealistic expectations for the child's behavior;
- physical conditions in the home are hazardous and immediately threaten a child's safety, such as exposed live wiring, building capable of falling in, manufacturing of drugs (i.e. drug lab), or exposure to extreme weather;
- caregiver is subjecting the child to brutal or bizarre punishment such as confined to a cage, tied to an object, locked in a closet, forced feeding, scalding with hot water, burning with cigarettes, etc.;
- child requires immediate medical attention, and the absence of medical treatment could seriously affect the child's

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# From the Manual

## Present Danger Assessment and Planning (Continued)

health and well-being; such as a child who is severely malnourished, dehydrated or failure to thrive (the absence of routine medical care is not a present danger situation);

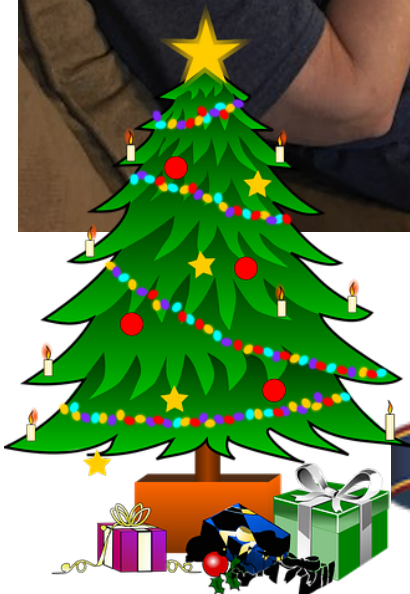
- child's behavior is actively endangering self or others and caregiver cannot or will not control the child's behavior or arrange or provide necessary care;
- evidence of recent sexual abuse, the perpetrator currently has access to identified victim, and no protective action is being taken by a non-offending caregiver;
- injuries such as facial bruises, injuries to the head, or multiple plane injuries; different types of injuries on the child, such as a serious burn and bruising; bruising or injuries to a non-ambulatory child, or immersion burns;
- severe to extreme maltreatment that is alleged to be occurring in the present (i.e., child has soft tissue injuries which pose a threat to vital organs; broken bones, burns, cuts, and lacerations; vicious beatings; biting; injuries to genitals; constantly being hit; physical torture; oral sex, anal sex, or intercourse; sexual abuse accompanied with physical abuse; bizarre sexual practices; pornography/sexual exploitation; constantly berating, double binding, verbal assault/intimidation; psychological torture such as constant scapegoating,

indifference, condemnation, and/or rejections);

- serious injuries that the caregivers and others cannot or will not explain, or the explanation is inconsistent with the observed or diagnosed injuries or condition;
- child's condition is the result of deliberate, preconceived planning or thinking that the caregiver is responsible for and that preceded the child's serious injuries or condition;
- child is profoundly fearful of their present home situation, or a particular person living in or having access to the home because of a specific concern of personal threat (this does not include generalized fear or anxiety);
- there is evidence of abuse or neglect and the caregiver cannot or will not produce the child, refuses access to the child, is likely to flee with the child, or is actively avoiding DCS (such as not allowing others to have contact with the child or moving a child around among relatives, adults or different homes).

**Part 1b of 2; Chapter 2: Section 4 to appear in a future issue.**

# CASA Christmas Photo Album





# CASA of Arizona

**My name is Pamela.**



I was 7 years old the first time I was taken from my home. Foster homes came and went. Schools were here and there. Caseworkers drifted in and out of my life. After six years of placement, the court appointed Pat.

Pat came to see me quite often and called me when she couldn't come in person. She worked with my lawyers to appeal the court's decision. She got me visits with my old foster family, made sure I was seeing my therapist regularly, and checked with my teachers to make sure I was managing in school. She brought me newspaper clippings of youth who made it through hard times and of students who were able to get scholarships to cover their education.

I never had someone stand for me like she did. She stood before the judges, the lawyers, my mother, and caseworkers and wasn't swayed by their opinions. It completely amazed me. I trusted her more with every visit. She became not only an advocate but a friend.

Earlier this year, I testified to a legislative committee on behalf of the CASA program. At the end of the testimony I said, "To give a child a CASA is to give them a voice. To give them a voice is to give them hope, and to give them hope is to give them the world". As a child who was assigned a CASA years ago, I believe that with all my heart

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